

Paul Ryan Prepared Opening Statement
Defense Hearing – Feb. 4, 2009

- ▶ Thank you, Chairman Spratt.
- ▶ Clearly, the bulk of Congress' attention has been – and remains – focused squarely on addressing the current crisis in our economy. But dealing with the economic crisis does not excuse – or even diminish – Congress' responsibility to the *primary* role of the Federal Government – and that's our national defense.
- ▶ So, even as the economy has replaced the Global War on Terrorism on the front *page*, it does not replace our commitment to those on the front *lines*.
- ▶ Our job – as it has always been – is to ensure American soldiers have the best available to them.
- ▶ But, as this hearing will point out, DoD's plan *far* exceeds what has been budgeted. Just as in the civilian sector, DoD's health care spending is increasing at an unsustainable rate. And just as in the rest of the budget, these costs are beginning to eat into their discretionary budget. So I have a particular interest in hearing from both witnesses about what DoD is doing – or is at least planning to do – to address this problem.
- ▶ Finally, as everyone on this Committee is well aware, DoD did not receive a clean audit last year. It has, in fact, been on GAO's High Risk list for as long as I can remember – and regrettably, I've not heard any indication these problems will be resolved in the near future.
- ▶ My point here is that while we must ensure our troops are fully funded, we cannot simply throw money at the Pentagon without proper oversight and accountability.
- ▶ I look forward to exploring with our witnesses the drivers behind DoD's growing budgets – and how, together with Congress, it might more efficiently meet its important mission.